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Jody Powell

Back to You, Jack

Two weeks ago I reported that there was an organized disinformation campaign in 1980 designed to discredit and defeat my former boss through the use of forged documents and operatives inside the government. As one of the more successful efforts of that campaign I cited a series of columns by Jack Anderson, released as the 1980 Democratic convention concluded, charging that President Carter had decided to invade Iran in mid-October to bolster his election prospects.

Anderson has now responded with some asperity, in a column published Monday in The Post, and he deserves an answer. Most of his response can be dealt with expeditiously. It consists of a series of decidedly unflattering comments concerning my credibility and motivations. I'm specifically charged with: exaggerating the effectiveness of Gov. Carter's reorganization of state government, plotting to woo both pro- and anti-Wallace people in 1976, sending a letter to a constituent over Gov. Jimmy Carter's signature that he had not approved, lying to the press in April of 1980 to protect the secrecy of the rescue operation then under way, and being desirous of seeing the Carter administration treated favorably by history.

I'm willing to plead *nolo* to all the sins listed above—and several others of a more heinous nature—if that will allow us to get back to the original subject: whether or not Anderson has genuine documentation to support the astounding allegations he made in August 1980.

Anderson's first line of defense is to claim that he was misquoted—that he said only that President Carter had "ordered preparations" for an invasion. Horsefeathers!

Although he did note that the president could "halt the assault" as late as "12 hours before D-Day," the import of his charges is unmistakable to anyone who cares to reexamine those columns. For those who may not be as exercised by this controversy as Anderson and myself, a few quotes from his columns may be helpful.

"I am now able to report how our armed forces plan to invade in whole portions of Iran."

"The tentative invasion date has been set suspiciously for mid-October."

"[The president] cannot truthfully deny that he has expressed his intention to go ahead with [plans to invade Iran.] Van Atta [Anderson's associate] has seen the documentation; he has spoken to several witnesses."

"[Polls] had more to do with Carter's decision to attack Iran than any other development."

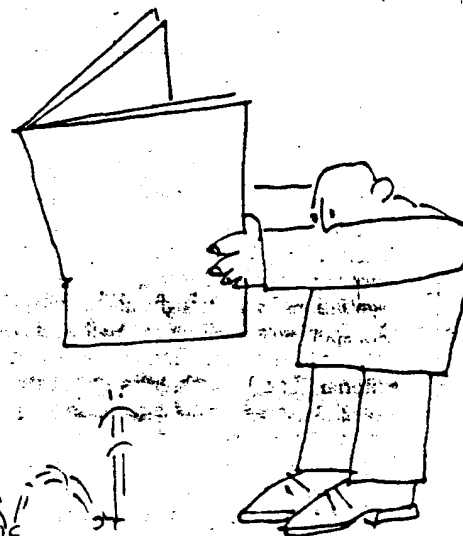
"If President Carter should go ahead with his plan to invade Iran in October, he would risk war with the Soviet Union. . . . This is the awesome danger that Carter is courting for the sake of hyping his political appeal on election eve."

"The truth is that although work on contingency plans for a second rescue operation began immediately after the failure of the first, no decision to implement them, tentative or otherwise, was ever made. Conditions never arose that were even remotely consistent with such an attempt. Nor did the rescue plans that existed resemble those described by Anderson."

In recent days, former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, former defense secretary Harold Brown, and the men who were serving as director of Central Intelligence and chairman of the Joint Chiefs have reconfirmed that there was no "tentative invasion date," no "D Day," no "intention to invade," and no "decision to attack" Iran. In specifics and in general, what Jack Anderson wrote was flat wrong.

Unless these people are all liars, there are two possibilities: Anderson has, as he stated publicly in his columns and privately to me this week, documents and sources that prove his allegations but the documents are forgeries and the sources liars; or he doesn't have them. I am inclined to believe the first, but accept the possibility of the second.

Anderson's second defense is to challenge me to identify the documents and the individuals who fed him the information. I must admit, he has me there. Only he knows what he has and where he got it.



By Salih Memecan

I cannot prove that genuine documentation does not exist. Anderson, however, can easily prove that it does.

An organization called the National News Council exists to deal with just such disputes. It is directed and staffed by professional journalists with an abiding commitment to protecting sources. I challenge Anderson to present his documents and sources to the News Council for investigation. Let them decide if he can support his allegations with genuine documentation. In short, Jack, put up or hush up.

Footnote: Mr. Anderson has expressed an interest in what information I have to link him to the other disinformation efforts disclosed in my previous column: in September 1980, The Washington Post was given what was supposed to be a CIA study predicting that the first rescue attempt would result in 60 percent casualties among the hostages. That document turned out to be a forgery, and no story was written. In November 1980, in a column entitled "Desert Run: Doomed From The Start," Jack Anderson reported that a CIA study of the first rescue mission had predicted that "There would be 60 percent losses among the hostages."

So while we're at it, Jack, give the News Council your documentation on that one, too. I'll make a copy of the forged document available for comparison. Here's betting you can't find yours.

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